

Ohr Torah- Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Parashat Vayeshev:

Siman #48

The verse "And Jacob dwelled in the land of his father's sojourning, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations, etc." (Genesis 37:1) hints at the following:

It is known that the primary purpose of human creation in this world is to fulfill the commandments of the Creator, may He be blessed, and to serve Him, as it is written: "to work it and to guard it" (Genesis 2:15). Our Sages of blessed memory interpreted this as follows: "to work it" refers to the positive commandments, and "to guard it" refers to the prohibitions. This is the ultimate purpose of one's existence in this world, akin to the parable of a king who lost a precious gem from his ring. This parable will be explained in greater detail below, with God's help.

The righteous person, through their faith, carries out the mission they were sent to fulfill in this world—to work and to guard.

This is the meaning of "And he dwelled" (**vayeshev**)—the term implies a sense of delay. This means that all the days of Jacob's "delay" in this world, he remained attached to God, the Blessed One. Even though he was "in the land"—engaged in the materiality and corporeality of this world—he remained in the "sojourning of his father," meaning in awe of his Heavenly Father. Even when surrounded by the wicked, he did not learn from their ways. This is the meaning of "in the land of Canaan," as it is written, "Canaan carries deceitful scales" (Hosea 12:8). Nevertheless, he held fast to his integrity, and his intention was solely to increase "generations"—that is, mitzvot and good deeds, which are the true offspring of the righteous.

This is the meaning of "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph." It signifies an ongoing effort to add each day delight, joy, and satisfaction to his Creator. This is the characteristic of the righteous.

However, the wicked fail in their mission, going astray in the stubbornness of their heart from beginning to end. This is the meaning of "Joseph, at the age of seventeen, would tend the flock with his brothers" (Genesis 37:2). It suggests that all their time in this world, their intent and thoughts are solely focused on physical desires, to satisfy their cravings and indulge themselves. As our Sages taught, the dots over "et" in "tending the flock with his brothers" indicate that they only sought to tend to themselves.

The term "flock" (**צאן**) can also imply **צא** ("to go out"), meaning they went out entirely from the domain of their Heavenly Father, casting off the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. He is called a "youth" (**נער**), meaning that his entire life is characterized by immaturity, foolishness, and juvenile behavior. He associated with the sons of Bilhah, which implies he was accustomed to keeping company with gluttons and drunkards.

The term "Bilhah" (**בלהה**) can be interpreted as **בלה** ("to consume"), referring to these gluttons. Similarly, "the sons of Zilpah" (**זלפה**) alludes to the spilling (**זלף**) of wine, referring to drunkards. Because of this, he entirely forgot his Creator and the purpose of his existence, as well as the mission for which he was sent into this world. This is the meaning of **נשי** ("he forgot"), alluding to his forgetfulness of **אביו** ("his Father") in Heaven.

Afterward, the text returns to speak of the reward of the righteous: "And Joseph brought their evil report to their father" (Genesis 37:2). The righteous—who strive always to increase goodness, as mentioned above—observe the wicked deeds of their generation, feel anguish over the evil being done, and stand in the breach to rebuke them directly. They bring them to repentance and elevate them toward holiness. This is the meaning of "to their father," indicating that the righteous uplift the actions of the wicked toward their heavenly source.

For this reason, the Supernal Israel loved Joseph, "because he was a son of his old age" (Genesis 37:3), which the Targum translates as "a wise son." He created for him "a coat of many colors," which can be interpreted as alluding to the "garment of the scholars" (**חלוקת דרבנן**).

Siman #49

"And his father kept the matter in mind" (Genesis 37:11) means that thought guards speech, which represents a unification.

Ohr Torah- Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Parashat Vayeshev:

Siman #50

"She sat by the entrance to Enaim, and Judah saw her and thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face" (Genesis 38:14).

The explanation is as follows: **Tamar** (תמר) can be interpreted as **תם מר** ("innocent yet bitter"). A foreign thought (**מחשבה זרה**) is initially bitter, but in truth, it is pure and innocent. This is like the saying, "I have seen slaves riding horses" (Ecclesiastes 10:7). Horses (**סוסים**) symbolize the letters of prayer, and when a foreign thought rides upon them, a person is greatly astonished, wondering how a slave (the foreign thought) could ride upon the king's horse (the holy letters of prayer).

However, when one considers that these letters themselves are sacred, but their combination has been distorted into foolishness, one can transform them. By reflecting upon the holy nature of these letters and bringing them into proper focus, what initially seemed like foolish combinations can become words of Torah.

This is the meaning of "She sat by the entrance to Enaim"—the entrance through which all gaze toward the Holy One, Blessed Be He. "Judah saw her and thought she was a prostitute": **זו נאה** ("this is beautiful")—an organ of the Shechinah. Yet one might ask: If this thought is an extension of the Shechinah, why is it clothed in such foolishness? The answer is: "Because she had covered her face," meaning her inner essence is concealed.

This also relates to the verse, *"And there reigned in Edom Bela the son of Beor"* (Genesis 36:32). The Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, explained this in light of what is written in the **Zohar**: When a person is judged in each heavenly chamber, they may be expelled if they are unworthy. The "chambers" refer to words in which intellect resides. A person praying moves from letter to letter, from word to word. If they are unworthy, they are "expelled," meaning they are thrown a foreign thought and thereby find themselves outside.

This is the meaning of *"And there reigned in Edom Bela the son of Beor."* **Edom** signifies fiery passion or enthusiasm. When a person prays with enthusiasm, and a foreign thought takes hold of them, it is called **Bela**, meaning "cut off." **Ben**, "son," signifies understanding—the person understands what the foreign thought is. **Beor**, from the root "to burn," refers to burning away the foreign thought. From this process, one comes to an even greater enthusiasm for the Creator, may He be blessed, as is known.

"And the name of his city was Dinhabah" (Genesis 36:32). **Dinhabah** can be interpreted as **din** (judgment) and **hava** (awareness), meaning the person becomes aware of the need to render judgment upon themselves regarding this.

This explains the verse, *"Where is the one who counts the towers?"* (Isaiah 33:18). One might ask: How does the foreign thought have the audacity to latch onto prayer and confuse it? The answer is that it seeks to elevate itself toward the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and thereby brings one to a higher state of greatness.

This is the meaning of **"Who counts the towers"**—the towers are illuminated through the foreign thought, which brings about a state of spiritual greatness, as explained above.